

Pam-India 2

556

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No.



CAMELS AND THE GOSPEL.

By MAN SUKH LAL. (R.C. Ward).



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"So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment."—ESTHER viii. 14.



HE thermometer registers 110 degrees in the shade ; the roads of deep fine sand absorb and return the fierce glare of the powerful sun ; men and animals wearily seek the shade of village tree or city wall, and the deep drowsiness of the tropics is everywhere apparent. I mount my camel, and he snortingly and unwillingly rises to his feet and sniffs the hot air, before we start on our tour among the villages. Then I think of the wonderfully appropriate words in the Book of Esther : "*So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king's commandment.*" Does not that thought inspire one ? King Ahasuerus sent his messengers north, south, east, and west, throughout the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of his kingdom, in order to save the lives of his Jewish subjects who were in immediate danger of annihilation.

THE CARRION EATERS.

In Gujerat we are dealing with a people who for hundreds of years, whether under Moslem, Hindu, or British rulers, have not known what freedom and happiness mean. The Dherds are a proscribed people. They are forbidden to dwell in the villages proper, and are compelled to abide in a quarter apart ; they may not stand inside a court of justice, but must bawl out their evidence

through a door or window ; * they are compelled to do forced labour whenever their landlords please, and if a Dherd should accidentally touch a "higher" caste man, he would be severely thrashed. Lest these poor creatures should ever escape from their serfdom, the Hindu religious books state that any Brahmin who shall teach one of these people the way to heaven, shall himself be sent to hell ! Frequently one may see two or three travel-stained Dherds, walking from one railway compartment to another, but unable to get into any on account of the abusive threats hurled at them by the orthodox Hindus within.

Their daily food consists of millet-flour mixed with butter-milk, and the very coarsest kind of grain procurable. This latter is inexpensive, but sometimes causes violent twitching and convulsive movements in the bodies of those who live upon it. Some of the people say that this is caused by an alien seed, almost identical in appearance, which gets mixed with the *codhra*. Very careful winnowing, however, renders the grain fairly safe. So deep and grinding is the poverty of these poor creatures, that plain rice is considered by them to be a considerable luxury, to be enjoyed only twice or thrice during the whole year. Whenever the cattle of a village die from snake bite or disease, the starving Dherds are called to drag away the carcass. The heat of the climate soon takes effect upon the dead animal, but even the fetid effluvium cannot deter them. Men, women, and children, the latter quite nude, come trooping and shouting as they carry their wicker-baskets and knives, and calling out, "Meat ! meat ! Come and get your share !" For the next few hours, human vultures will compete with each other and the

* The writer has, on several occasions, had to insist that this practice be abandoned in British courts. The Native officials reluctantly and slowly give in when a European is present to press the British law. This should cause reflection on the part of those who urge that non-Christian Indian officials should take the place of Europeans.

thousands of flies for a piece of the flesh which has been dragged about in the blood and dust. And yet how lightly some well-nurtured Christians daily say, with little realisation of what hunger is, "Give us this day our daily bread."

THEY EXPECT A SAVIOUR.

Hanuman the monkey-god, and Kàli the fierce and bloody consort of Shiva, are the favourite idols worshipped. But they have a striking belief, to the effect that in the fulness of time there shall come to them a great deliverer, who shall break the bands of their serfdom, remove the stumbling-blocks to their mental and moral advancement, and cause them to be equal with those who now oppress them. And his name is to be NISHKALANK; *i.e.*, the *Spotless One* !

"The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee ; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet ; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel " (Isaiah lx. 14).

HOW THEY RECEIVE THE MESSAGE.

And now let us enter a village. Carefully guiding the camel between the two hedges of prickly cactii, we ride into the hollow square lined with clay huts or small houses built with sun-baked bricks. The camel kneels down and we alight. As we straighten ourselves up and stretch our cramped legs, the people begin to gather around. Men with agricultural implements upon their shoulders, women bearing water-pots upon their heads, and little children throwing sand at the black buffaloes—all come crowding in upon us. Taking the proffered seat upon a small bed-cot, under the mango tree, we request them to be seated and listen.

"Have you come to speak against our religion ?" The question comes from

a *bhagat*, or priest, with a red ochre mark upon his forehead and beads round his neck.

“Why should I speak against your religion? You will do that yourselves before I have finished speaking.”

“Speak then!”

“Listen to a parable. A man had malarial fever and daily drank medicine, but the more medicine he drank, the worse he became. Yet his learned friends insisted upon praising that medicine, and cautioned him against any other. Should he keep on drinking it, or ought he to try another?”

Chorus of voices: “Why, he should try another, certainly.”

“Well, there are some old men present among you. They can remember that many years ago this village had the same idols, priests, and temples as it now has. Thousands of sacrifices have been offered since then, and much worship has been done. The people of this village stole in those days, they gave false evidence, they committed adultery, and they were deplorably miserable and debased. Are they not the same to-day? Can you show me one really good man or family in the place? Then, has your idol worship helped and blessed and improved you at all?”

“No! What you say is true, Sahib.”

Now the door is open for a Gospel address, to which they attentively listen, except when they ask questions in the Eastern fashion. At the conclusion of our task, I feel exhausted and suggest departure. But two or three of the men request to be baptized. I tell them about the man who began to build a tower without first counting the cost, and, with that keen intuition characteristic of the Indian people, they at once grasp and appreciate the point. They will be visited a number of times, and when favourably reported upon, a day will be set apart for the baptismal service: thus a few more

threads of the net which heathenism has thrown over the heads of the millions of India will be severed, never again to be joined.

WHY SPEED IS NEEDED.

The missionaries in Gujerat are running a race with merciless enemies—opium, strong drink, Mohammedanism, and—perhaps more subtle than all—Romanism. Two Romish priests have appeared in Gujerat with their mumble-jumble and scheming superstition to add to India's darkness. In view of these things, let us more than ever pray to be "*hastened and pressed on by the King's commandment.*"

I have just been reading an address by one of Scotland's finest ministers, and one passage has taken hold of my mind with force: "Young preachers, with your great life still before you, study your own heart day and night. Watch every beat, and flutter, and creep of your own heart day and night. Seek sensibility of heart above all Latin, and Greek, and Hebrew: above all logic, and style, and delivery. Add all these things, and everything else, to sensibility of heart: but one thing is needful if you would not be a castaway like some of us. Were you spiritually sensible preachers, you would soon get inside your people's hearts, and you would hold your people's hearts to the end. Deep answers to deep." How true it is! The tendency of most things in India is to fossilize and warp one, so that he gets used to misery and sorrow, in the same way that the horses in the wedding processions become impervious to drums and cymbals which would drive a fresh horse almost wild.

NINE HUNDRED CONVERSIONS.

When John sent messengers to Jesus saying, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" the answer was: "Go and show John

again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them" (Matt. xi. 2-5).

Herein lies the difference. Vedantism, Theosophy, Buddhism, Kabirism, Unitarianism, and many other man-made systems have appeared upon the field of Hindustan, but each has gone down before the power of caste. Christianity repudiates and defeats caste-hatred, by bringing the Gospel to the poor and substituting the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. It is the unique glory and privilege of God's servants here and in the homeland, to take part in this divine revolution. Rev. E. F. Frease, the Presiding Elder under whose oversight the missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Gujerat are working, records the inspiring fact that within the last fourteen months, about nine hundred idolaters have been converted and baptized into Christianity! And that is not all; every one of them has to become a pledged abstainer from all intoxicating drinks, and is forbidden to deal in the same.

Cottage schools have been established in many of the villages, under the care of an Indian pastor-teacher, when the monetary support is to hand. It is one of the deepest joys of my life to see thirty or forty of these hearty village Christians gathered together for prayer or praise, and to hear the little brown-faced, bright-eyed children repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Apostles' Creed in the Gujerati language.

BITTER PERSECUTION FOLLOWS

the establishment of a Gospel company in most instances. It has been stated by some who approve only of work among the so-called "high-class" idolaters, that a Dherd has much to gain and little to lose by conversion. It is a

mistake based upon insufficient knowledge. Scarcely a week passes without our people in some part of the field being subjected to cruel outrage. Their houses have been burned, their butter-milk and other supplies stopped, their very right to walk on the village roads disputed, and in other instances the converts have been so mercilessly beaten as to break their limbs. Quite recently the tent used by myself for village preaching was burned down in the middle of the night. "Alas, master, for it was borrowed." And usually the native *mamlatdars* or magistrates are prejudiced against the Christians, and so redress is impossible. Yet we seldom hear of a recantation. Thank God for these poor but faithful souls! In fresh villages they still call us to preach to them the word of life. The only present limit to the spread of the work is our inability to employ any more pastor-teachers to instruct them after they are baptized. To baptize and then leave them uninstructed, means to create a scandal and a stumbling-block for coming generations. And what can we do? We can only toil on, and meanwhile earnestly pray that the Lord's servants in other and better favoured lands, shall be impelled to render some help in the building up of a bright Christian church in poor benighted, sin-blighted India.—*The Bombay Guardian*.

Most of the members of the Anti-Opium Alliance will know by this time that Mr and Mrs M. S. Lal returned to India in October last. Not finding the way open for further Anti-Opium work, they have resumed missionary work in Gujerat, Mrs Lal's native country.

They are working in association with the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, but part of their support has to be provided by friends in this country. Mr and Mrs Lal are willing to live on £70 a year, if by so doing they can preach the Gospel to the poor down-trodden people of Gujerat. If any members of the Anti-Opium Alliance would like to share in the privilege of supporting these devoted servants of Christ, contributions (large or small) will be gladly received and acknowledged by Mr GRANT JACKSON (Hon. Secretary), 44 Dick Place, Edinburgh, from whom copies of this leaflet may be had.